Title: *Who Tells Their Story? Demographic Patterns in Utilization of the Novel ERAS "Impactful Experiences" Section Among Orthopaedic Surgery Applicants*

Intro: In 2023, the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) introduced an optional 'Impactful Experiences' section. It offers applicants a space to share significant life challenges or formative experiences that can help programs to better understand their accomplishments in light of their personal circumstances. The aim of our study was to analyze the demographics of applicants who complete the 'Impactful Experiences' section.

Methods: We analyzed ERAS data for the 2024-2025 application cycle. Participation-to-prevalence ratios (PPRs) were calculated for men and women who completed the narrative section relative to their prevalence among orthopedic surgery applicants. We used two-proportion z-tests to compare the representation of each demographic group among applicants who completed the 'Impactful Experiences' section versus their representation in the overall applicant pool.

Results: A total of 1,862 applicants applied to orthopaedic surgery residency programs during the 2025 ERAS cycle. Of these, 40.2% of applicants completed the 'Impactful Experiences' section in 2025. Women formed the minority of applicants (26.2%),but had equivalent representation among applicants completing the narrative section (24.5%, PPR= 0.94, p= 0.34). The highest PPRs were found in *Black or African American* (PPR= 1.57, $p < 0.01$), *Hispanic or Latino* (PPR = 1.34, $p < 0.01$), and *Middle Eastern or North African* applicants (PPR= 1.39, $p < 0.01$). IMG applicants were significantly overrepresented (PPR= 1.73, $p < 0.01$), MD applicants were significantly underrepresented (PPR = 0.89, $p < 0.01$), and DO applicants showed proportional representation (PPR= 1.01, $p = 0.92$).

Conclusions:
The disproportionate utilization of this narrative space by underrepresented minorities and international medical graduates suggests that the 'Impactful Experiences' section may be capturing systemic barriers these groups face along their path to orthopedic surgery, raising questions about whether programs are adequately weighing these contextual factors in holistic review.